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 INFO RUFHOL/AMEMBASSY ROME

SECRET JERUSALEM 6633

SUBJECT: JUDEA UNREST CHALLENGES HEROD GOVT

1. JUDEA TENSE IN WAKE OF SPATE OF RUMORS AND PORTENTS. THREE WISE MEN REPORTEDLY ARRIVED RECENTLY ON DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS AS AFRO-ASIAN CULTURAL MISSION. SAID THEY SEARCHING FOR QUOTE KING OF KINGS UNQUOTE. HEROD AT FIRST FLATTERED THINKING THEY MEANT HIM BUT NOW ALARMED WHEN THEIR ABRUPT DISAPPEARANCE INDICATED THEY DID NOT. HEROD'S USUALLY EFFICIENT INTELLIGENCE SERVICE UNABLE TO LOCATE THEM AND EMBASSY EFFORTS EQUALLY UNAVAILING, SUGGESTING THEY HAVE GONE OUT OF JERUSALEM BY ANOTHER WAY.
2. MORE RECENTLY A BRIGHT STAR APPEARED IN EAST IN GENERAL DIRECTION BETHLEHEM. SCIENCE AND AIR ATTACHES FRANKLY BAFFLED BY THIS PHENOMENON. STAR REPORTEDLY HAS ODD EFFECT ON OBSERVERS, FILLING THEM WITH SENSE OF JOY AND OPTIMISM. SUGGEST NASA AND SMITHSONIAN MAY WISH INVESTIGATE.
3. HEROD SERIOUSLY WORRIED BUT AT A LOSS AS TO COURSE TO TAKE. COMPREHENSIVE COUNTRY TEAM APPRECIATION IMPOSSIBLE ON BASIS FRAGMENTARY INFO AVAILABLE. HEROD NOT ABOVE FLIRTATION WITH AFRO-ASIANS IN ORDER REMIND ROME OF HIS IMPORTANCE, BUT IF THIS HIS TACTIC IT CLEARLY IS GETTING OUT OF HAND.
4. CONFUSED REPORTS FROM BETHLEHEM ITSELF SUGGEST IMPORTANT IF UNCLEAR DEVELOPMENTS THERE. CITY JAMMED BY INFUX OF PERSONS TO PAY HEROD'S NEW HEAD TAX AS REPORTED REFTEL. HOTEL RESERVATIONS IMPOSSIBLE AND EVEN STABLES BEING RENTED. WILD REPORTS RECEIVED HERE OF ANGELS BENDING NEAR THE EARTH AND APPEARING TO SHEPHERDS KEEPING FLOCKS BY NIGHT. MESSAGE OF ANGELS GARBLED BUT APPEARS TO BE EITHER QUOTE PEACE ON EARTH GOOD WILL TO MEN UNQUOTE OR QUOTE PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN OF GOOD WILL UNQUOTE.
5. COMMENT: SUBSTANCE OF MESSAGE FROM QUOTE ANGELS UNQUOTE OBVIOUSLY DIFFERENT IN TWO CASES BUT EITHER WAY IT MAY IF TRUE BE OF SOME UNKNOWN SIGNIFICANCE.

HEDLEY

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